

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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R 091100Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9781

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 0174

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, RP

SUBJ: SAUDI ARABIA AND PHILIPPINE MUSLIM PROBLEM

REF : MANILA 14438

BEGIN SUMMARY: SAUDI PRESS IN LAST FEW DAYS HAS CARRIED A NUMBER OF REPORTS ON THE PHILIPPINES. A MEMBER OF SAUDI DELEGATION WHICH RECENTLY VISITED THERE TELLS US HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE TREATMENT THEY RECEIVED AND THAT HE BELIEVES GOP SINCERE IN ITS EFFORTS REACH ACCOMMODATION WITH MUSLIM COMMUNITY, MANY OF THE PROBLEMS OF WHICH COME FROM BAD LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY

1. WITHIN PAST FEW DAYS SAUDI PRESS HAS DEVOTED UNUSUAL ATTENTION TO THE PHILIPPINES AND ITS PROBLEMS. PRESS HAS BEEN FOLLOWING THE VISIT OF SEC GEN TUHAJIMY OF THE ISLAMIC SECRETARIAT AND ON JANUARY 7 CARRIED A LENGTHY AFP ARTICLE DATED KUALA LUMPUR REPORTING TUHAJIMY'S COMMENTS ON HIS TRIP, INCLUDING A STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT A MEDIATION EFFORT WOULD GET UNDERWAY WITHIN NEXT TEN DAYS UNDER HIS AUSPICES. JAN 8 PRESS REPORTS THAT INDONESIAN FONMIN HAS DECLARED THE SUPPORT OF HIS

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GOV'T FOR A SOLUTION RESPECTING PHILIPPINE SOVEREIGNTY AND

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. ON JANUARY 3 THE PRESS HAD REPORTED THAT THE PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO SAUDI ARABIA HAD CALLED UPON THE SAUDI MINISTER OF EDUCATION, HASAN AL SHAYKH TO EXTEND AN INVITATION FROM PRESIDENT MARCOS TO VISIT THE PHILIPPINES.

2. ON JAN 5 POL CHIEF HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WITH FON OFF DIRECTOR EASTERN AFFAIRS AHMAD SIRAJ HIS TRIP TO THE PHILIPPINES IN DECEMBER WITH DEP FONMIN SULTAN (SIRAJ HAD JUST RETURNED FROM HOLIDAY IN EUROPE AT THE END OF THE ASIAN TRIP). THE HIGH LEVEL TREATMENT GIVEN THE DELEGATION IN THE PHILIPPINES HAD CLEARLY MADE THAT THE HIGH POINT OF THE FIVE NATION TOUR. SIRAJ HIMSELF CAME AWAY WITH A SERIES OF RATHER STRONG IMPRESSIONS BENERALLY FAVORABLE TO THE GOP.

3. HE SAID THAT AFTER TALKING WITH PHILIPPINE OFFICIALS AND PHILIPPINE MUSLIM LEADERS, HE IS CONVINCED THAT THE PROBLEMS OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY ARE PRIMARILY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE POOR QUALITY OF ITS OWN LEADERSHIP. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE ARMED CONFLICT THERE BEARS ANY RESEMBLANCE TO A REAL NATIONAL STRUGGLE, NOR DOES HE BELIEVE THAT THE POVERTY OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IS NECESSARILY ATTRIBUTABLE TO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST IT. HE SAID THAT IN A COUNTRY MADE UP OF NUMEROUS ISLANDS AND DENSE JUNGLE WHERE ONLY TEN PERCENT OF THE POPULATION HAS ELECTRICITY, THE CONDITION OF THE MUSLIMS IS PERHAPS NOT SO BAD. HE PERSONALLY FEELS THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS IS SINCERE IN WANTING A FAIR AND PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

4. SIRAJ REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT ON THE SUBJECT OF TUHAIMY'S CURRENT EFFORTS BUT SAID THAT THE SAUDI DELEGATION HAD RECOMMENDED TO THE GOP THAT JIDDA WOULD BE THE BEST PLACE FOR A MULTILATERAL MEDIATION MEETING. AS FOR SAUDI ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO THE PHILIPPINES, HE SAID THAT IT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING WHEN WELL THOUGHT OUT PROJECTS HAD BEEN DRAWN UP AND PRESENTED, THROUGH HE DID NOT HTINK THIS AID WOULD BE GIVEN DIRECTLY. SAUDI ARABIA PREFERS TO DEAL THRUH INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND SIRAJ SUGGESTED THAT THE APPROPRIATE INSTRUMENT IN THIS CASE WOULD BE THE ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK SOON TO ENTER INTO OPERATION.

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5. COMMENT: SIRAJ NOTED THAT DURING HIS VISIT PHILIPPINE OFFICIALS HAD BEMOANED THE DEATH OF MINSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SAQQAF. HE SAID THAT THEY WERE CORRECT IN DOING SO AS SAQQAF HAD DEVELOPED A PERSONAL INTEREST IN AND CONCERN FOR THE PHILIPPINES. WE DON'T KNOW IF DEPFONMIN SULTAN SHARES SIRAJ'S SYMPATHY FOR THE PROBLEMS OF THE GOP,BUT HE WILL IN ANY CASE BE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR SAQQAF. AS THE OFFICIAL MOST CLOSELY RESPONSIBLE FOR RELATIONS WITH THE PHILIPPINES,

AHMAD SIRAJ MIGHT EVEN BE IN A POSITION TO BE MORE HELPFUL
THAN SULTAN. REPORTS TO THE KING FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY
WILL PROBABLY REFLECT HIS VIEWS.
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